United Nations A/55/PV.79

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

79th plenary meeting
Friday, 1 December 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 175

The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict

Draft resolution A/55/L.52

The President: I give the floor to the representative of South Africa to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.52.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.52, entitled "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict: breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to prevention and settlement of conflicts."

Ordinarily, diamonds are a very precious commodity. Besides their intrinsic value, diamonds are also purchased for their beauty. However, some of the trade in these much-desired stones has an ugly side as well. We will never be able to forget the sight of the children of Sierra Leone whose missing limbs were brutally hacked off by crazed killers funded by the profits of the illicit trade in conflict diamonds, or the displacement and deaths of hundreds of thousands of Angolan citizens by the diamond-funded UNITA rebels.

It is important to emphasize, however, that conflict diamonds make up only about four per cent of the total world diamond market. That means that 96 per cent of the world's diamonds are in fact "prosperity diamonds". This legitimate trade in diamonds is critical to economic development in many countries. Thousands of families in my country and across our region owe their livelihoods to the mining and sale of legitimate diamonds.

The sponsors of this draft resolution firmly believe that the United Nations must take steps to address the issue of conflict diamonds. We believe this can be done through concerted international coordination and action. This will prove that the international community is neither powerless nor silent on the issue of conflict diamonds. We hope that Member States will join in making a strong, clear and unambiguous statement that the world is able and ready to act decisively in breaking the link between illicit transactions of rough diamonds and armed conflict.

The draft resolution is a result of a process that first started in Kimberley in May 2000. Further meetings were held in Luanda, London and Windhoek. Those meetings became known as the Kimberley Process, named after the South African city in which diamonds were first mined commercially, in 1879. The Kimberley Process evolved out of an inclusive approach by Governments, industry and civil society in the diamond exporting, processing and importing States to find solutions to the problem of conflict diamonds. On 21 September, 16 countries participated in a ministerial meeting of the Kimberley Process in Pretoria.

The Kimberley Process sought to stop conflict diamonds from entering the legitimate diamond market, thereby denying rebel movements income to

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finance military efforts aimed at undermining or overthrowing legitimate Governments. The process thus protects the legitimate diamond market while clearly signalling the intention of all parties involved to address conflict diamonds in a meaningful and practical manner.

South Africa expects that the Kimberley Process will lead to the creation and implementation of an international certification scheme for rough diamonds. That certification scheme will inform national certification schemes that are functional and have legal enforcement capacities to monitor, regulate and control diamond transactions. In our region of sSouthern Africa, countries such as Botswana, Namibia and South Africa have already designed systems to monitor the production and marketing of diamonds originating within their borders. Similar important initiatives have already been taken by the Governments of Angola and Sierra Leone to address the problem of conflict diamonds. It is for these reasons that my delegation wishes to urge that resources be made available to assist more countries to develop national diamond certification schemes with legal enforcement capacities.

In developing this draft resolution, the countries represented in the Kimberley Process have sought to create a broad, yet comprehensive, approach to addressing the problem of conflict diamonds. We are mindful also that both the diamond industry and Government must adopt sustainable development approaches. Diamond industries are valuable sources of employment, foreign exchange, tax revenue and investments. We are also conscious of the responsibility of the diamond industry to rehabilitate the environment and infrastructure of communities that may be disturbed or disrupted where mining activities take place.

The draft resolution acknowledges the role of conflict diamonds in fuelling conflicts and their devastating impact on peace, safety and security for all people in affected countries. It further highlights the use of conflict diamonds by rebel movements to finance their activities, including attempts to undermine or overthrow legitimate Governments. Furthermore, it emphasises that measures taken against conflict diamonds should be effective, pragmatic and consistent with international law. The need to enforce Security Council resolutions is also highlighted.

My Government looks forward to an enlarged Kimberley Process to include all key countries with significant interests in the diamond industry. We believe that a partnership between government, industry and civil society will protect the legitimate industry from any unintended negative impacts.

My delegation is pleased that this draft resolution has attracted a very large number of sponsors. I hope that the General Assembly will support this important initiative by adopting the draft resolution by consensus.

We are aware that there are Member States that have difficulties with parts of this draft resolution. It took the countries of the Kimberley Process many weeks to finally arrive at this compromise text. We acknowledge that it may not cover every issue and every nuance of this important debate. However, we hope it will earn the Assembly's support for one major reason, namely, that those who trade in illicit conflict diamonds must be left with the clear and unambiguous message that the United Nations is determined to act decisively to break the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict.

Mr. Holbrooke (United States of America): I am honoured to be here today to speak on an issue which is of the greatest of urgency — the plague that we call "conflict" diamonds. For much too long, our response to this problem was weak and wholly inadequate. By ignoring the problem or letting those with vested interests in the trade convince us that it was not a problem, we failed to discharge our highest responsibility to work to prevent conflicts before they begin.

Today let us make a new beginning. The illegal diamond trade fuels a culture of criminality and conflict, especially, and most tragically, in Africa. There can be no debate that the time has come, and even long passed, to do something about it. In the past year we have joined with leaders from the Governments of diamond-producing and diamond-importing nations, legitimate private diamond enterprises and non-governmental organizations. Government and industry must work together to develop the techniques and mechanisms to end this trade.

As we have seen in Angola, Sierra Leone, Congo and elsewhere, there is a direct link between conflict diamonds and funds for rebel movements to purchase sophisticated illicit arms. In such places, we have seen

the terrible consequences: homeless families, destroyed communities, poisoned societies, and children with their limbs hacked off.

In the past year, the United Nations has acted to deal with the specific problems in Angola and Sierra Leone, and there has been some progress. In June 1998, the Security Council adopted resolution 1173 (1998), which prohibited the direct or indirect import from Angola of all diamonds not controlled through the Certificate of Origin regime of the Angolan Government.

Subsequently, under the leadership of Canada as Chairman of the United Nations sanctions Committee for Angola, the Security Council explored and approved new steps to reduce sanction leakage. This effort continues, and I hope that it is beginning to dry up the sources of financing for the rebel UNITA forces.

This year, after the Lomé Agreement in Sierra Leone broke down, the Security Council acted again. I am proud that the United States took a leadership role in that regard. With resolution 1306 (2000), the United Nations placed a mandatory prohibition on the purchase of diamonds from Sierra Leone that are not certified by the Government. The Government of Sierra Leone has now established a diamond-certification regime and is trying to make it effective.

In addition, during last year's historic Security Council summit, chaired by Mali and by its President Konaré, the heads of State or Government decided to endorse action in areas where illegal exploitation and trafficking contribute to the escalation and continuation of conflict.

One area that has not yet been thoroughly addressed is the issue of diamonds mined from territory under foreign military occupation. This problem affects, for example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which sees much of its diamond revenue siphoned off by others. But let us not fool ourselves into thinking that acting in this regard in these select areas alone will solve the problem. This is not just an African problem, or an Asian problem, or a European problem: it is a global problem, and it requires a global solution.

Today we are seeing the beginning of a global answer. The United States is pleased by the efforts of those countries that produce, process, export and import diamonds, industry representatives and non-governmental organizations that have taken initiatives on this problem. Beginning with the initial meeting in Kimberley, South Africa, last May, and culminating with last September's ministerial meeting in Pretoria, the Kimberley process has established the broad concept of an international certification regime for rough diamonds. In October, in London, over 35 nations added their support. This important achievement requires our backing. The time is overdue for the General Assembly — the parliament of human beings — to express its support for these efforts.

As we act to end this trade in conflict diamonds, let us not forget, at the same time, that there is a strong, legitimate market in diamonds. Let me underline that we do not wish to harm the legitimate industry. On the contrary: this should help the legitimate industry, and it should help bring the profits and proceeds from this great patrimony to the countries that are fortunate enough to have diamond mines to the people of those countries.

Botswana is a perfect example: a strong democracy which is dependent on its active diamond trade for economic health. The same is true of Namibia. South Africa, still emerging from the inequities and cruelties of apartheid, also relies on its diamond sector, and we have just heard Ambassador Kumalo's eloquent statement on behalf of his country, which is such a central actor in this great and longstanding drama. Equally important, nations in crisis such as Sierra Leone and Angola will benefit enormously if illegitimate trade is squeezed out and legitimate markets protected.

Today I stand here on behalf of our country to pledge that the United States will work with all concerned to achieve and advance this process. An integrated approach, including Governments, industry and civil society — and I am glad that we have representatives of the diamond industry here in this Hall today — is the most effective means of proceeding.

We believe that it is essential to support the broad-based efforts of Kimberley, or a Kimberley-like process, to help design an international diamond certification to address this global process. We welcome South Africa's strong leadership role in the Kimberley process and its sponsorship of today's General Assembly resolution. We also welcome the

decision of Namibia to host a technical meeting early next year.

Let us send from the United Nations to the world today a message to all those who use diamonds to advance terrible goals. Let us make clear that the international community will finally live up to its responsibilities. We must put these people out of business. We cannot allow one of the world's most precious and beautiful stones to become a symbol of terror and hardship forever.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area — Iceland — align themselves with this statement.

For the first time, the General Assembly is considering the problem of illicit trade in diamonds and its link with conflicts. The European Union welcomes this initiative, for success in combating illicit trade of this kind cannot be achieved on a purely national basis but requires enhanced international cooperation in ensuring the application of the rule of law. For years, such trade has made it possible to finance the purchase of arms and hence to perpetuate armed conflict. Three cases of diamond-producing countries beset with conflict naturally spring to mind.

Sierra Leone is an alarming example of the illegal trade in diamonds. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) has relied on such trade to finance its military campaigns. The civil populations have been the victims of tragic waves of violence. Angola is another case. Over the past decade, the illegal trade in diamonds has made more than $3 billion for UNITA. This money has enabled it to continue its armed struggle. The third case is that of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The pillage of that country's economic riches, especially diamonds, is fuelling continued armed conflict. It has become increasingly apparent that lust for these riches is one of the motives for the presence of foreign troops in the Congo, in violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that country, just as it is today one of the main reasons for the RUF's armed rebellion in Sierra Leone and, indeed, that of UNITA in Angola.

It should be stressed that civil society, and especially non-governmental organizations, have strongly contributed to making people aware of the seriousness of such trade. In this context, the fight against illegal diamond trafficking is a factor in preventing conflicts.

The search for solutions has recently progressed thanks to the combined action of two players: the United Nations and the States of the Kimberley Process. The European Union above all welcomes the measures taken by the Security Council to ban trade in conflict diamonds. Security Council resolutions and declarations have established milestones in the fight against such trade. I am thinking in particular of resolutions 1173 (1978), 1237 (1999) and 1295 (2000) on Angola, providing for sanctions against UNITA's trade in diamonds and for the setting up of a group of experts and a monitoring mechanism; of resolution 1306 (2000) on Sierra Leone, including sanctions against the trade in diamonds beyond government control; and of the statement by the President of the Security Council of 2 June 2000 on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which provides for the establishment of a group of experts to collect information on all activities relating to the illegal exploitation of the natural resources and other riches of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially those violation of that country's sovereignty.

For their part, the big exporting and importing States and those with diamond industries have undertaken to combine efforts to implement action aimed at banning trade in conflict diamonds. Significant progress has been made by the Kimberley Process. The ministerial meeting held in Pretoria on 21 September led to the adoption of a statement highlighting the contribution which the creation of an international certification scheme could play in fighting the illicit trade in rough diamonds.

The European Union further notes the contribution of the diamond industry, in particular of the International Diamond Council, the Diamond High Council, the World Federation of Diamond Bourses and the International Association of Diamond Manufacturers, in support of international efforts on the creation of an international certification scheme. In this connection, the European Union favours continuing work to develop an international certification scheme for rough diamonds. Efforts along those lines should be encouraged.

In this context, the European Union recalls that the G-8 summit in Miyazaki on conflict prevention initiatives resulted in serious progress on combating the illegal trade in diamonds. The European Union intends to support an approach aimed at preventing illegal trade of this kind. At the same time, it wishes to preserve the legal trade in diamonds, which constitutes an essential resource for the development of numerous countries.

Any certification scheme will be exposed to risks of circumvention. Discussions should therefore be started on the fight against illegal trading and traders. By its very nature, trafficking is not confined within borders and criminal interests are often identical from one crisis to another. In this context, the possible creation of an international mechanism could be considered to monitor the trade in diamonds and other rare and precious raw materials that contribute to the financing of wars. In the framework of the United Nations, the creation of a unified expertise structure could also be considered to concentrate all collected data and to ensure the essential interlinkage between the different situations. In the meantime, wholehearted support should be given to the sanctions committees set up by the Security Council — particularly the committees, the group of experts and the monitoring body for Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone — in their efforts to expose illegal diamond trafficking. More generally, and beyond the particular issue of conflict diamonds, the European Union reiterates its concern at the threat which the illegal exploitation of natural riches poses for the security of many countries, especially in Africa.

A new stage in the fight against conflict diamonds needs to be embarked upon. The European Union supports the draft resolution which South Africa has submitted for adoption. Following the Kimberley Process, whose participating States also support it, this draft resolution proposes the creation of an international certification scheme for rough diamonds. States, especially the main exporters and importers, should make every effort possible to make expeditious progress on negotiations on an international scheme, with a view to introducing it as soon as possible, and to take any other steps possible to curb the illicit trade in rough diamonds. This draft resolution must be a first step towards conducting negotiations on this subject. It reflects the long-term interest of the United Nations in following up this highly important issue. We express the firm hope that the European Union will be fully and regularly informed on subsequent steps concerning the implementation of this draft resolution, in which the European Union intends to play a constructive and active role.

I would now ask this Assembly to listen carefully to what I have to say as the representative of France.

The text which has just been introduced by the Ambassador of South Africa is very important. It is the beginning of a process that France fully supports. It is good that the General Assembly is seized with the problem of conflict diamonds. For that very reason, however, since it is a beginning, we should be very clear and very precise on what we talk about.

France is of the view that – and I think that this is the understanding shared by the overwhelming majority of the members of this Assembly – conflict diamonds are

> "rough diamonds which are used by rebel movements to finance their military activities, including attempts to undermine or overthrow legitimate Governments",

as set out in the second preambular paragraph of the draft resolution. In addition, conflict diamonds are, as described in the sixth preambular paragraph,

> "rough diamonds originating from the territory of diamond-producing countries that is under military occupation by another country".

Concretely, this means, for example, that this applies not only to diamonds illegally produced and exported by UNITA in Angola or by the RUF in Sierra Leone, but also to diamonds illegally produced and exported in parts of the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that are occupied by foreign, non-invited troops. I am saying this after consulting the main author of the text, Ambassador Kumalo of South Africa, and I am saying this with his agreement. I would like to pay particular tribute to Ambassador Kumalo, who has lead this enterprise to success.

I think that we all agree with this definition. Let all those who have a different opinion, those who think that diamonds looted by foreign occupying forces are not conflict diamonds — in other words, diamonds that pay for and inspire conflicts — let them say so openly here today, for things must be clear amongst us at the time when we launch this important process.

In this spirit, France is convinced that States involved in the production, trade, transformation and use of diamonds and that participate in the Kimberley Process will be keen to deal with the problem of conflict diamonds in all its aspects, whether these diamonds come from rebel movements or from looting by foreign occupying forces. We have no doubt that the report that they will present to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, in pursuance of paragraph 6 of the resolution, will provide an opportunity to complement and specify anything that could not be spelled out in the text submitted to us today. Such an approach will reinforce the legitimacy and effectiveness of the steps taken by those States to rid the international diamond market of all diamonds that fuel and perpetuate wars.

Mr. Aboulgheit (Egypt)(*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by expressing our deep appreciation to the Ambassador of South Africa for his full presentation of the draft resolution before us today. I would also like to thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his initiative in asking for inclusion of a new item on the agenda of the General Assembly on the topic of "The role of diamonds in fuelling armed conflicts".

The past period has seen a greater international interest in and awareness of the destructive role of diamonds in fuelling different armed conflicts in various parts of the world and of the close link between diamonds, the flow of arms and finance to illegal armed groups that attempt to overturn the system of government recognized in the countries in which they operate. Undoubtedly, the General Assembly's consideration of this important topic will shed greater light on this serious problem and will intensify the consultations. This will ultimately lead to the adoption and implementation of a number of international measures that, in sum, aim at confronting and combating illicit trade in rough diamonds.

Out of our concern to follow upon this question and to participate in these efforts, the delegation of Egypt would like to make the following remarks.

First, all the measures aimed at confronting the illicit trade in rough diamonds and at cutting the link between this phenomenon and that of providing arms and finance to rebellious groups must in no way affect the legitimate trade in diamonds on which a number of countries depend, particularly African countries, to increase their financial resources and develop their exports and economies. Therefore, these efforts and measures must run parallel to an intensified international campaign that aims at separating so-called conflict diamonds from diamonds that are extracted, processed and exported in a fully legitimate manner. This must occur so that the international community — particularly societies that consume diamonds — does not develop the wrong impression that all forms and types of diamonds on the international market represent the conflict diamonds that we are trying to combat.

Secondly, if we want to establish defined and efficient systems to combat illicit trade in diamonds, the measures to be agreed upon for achieving this must be international and expanded so that they do not concentrate on any geographic area or any particular continent. These measures must also derive their relevance from an international, intergovernmental process characterized by transparency and in which all countries participate on an equal footing. This would guarantee the necessary cooperation by the international diamond industry, including the recently established World Diamond Council.

Thirdly, the delegation of Egypt takes note of the results of the ministerial meeting held on 21 September in Pretoria and the London Intergovernmental Meeting on Conflict Diamonds held on 25 and 26 October, within the framework of what has now become known as the Kimberley Process. Egypt believes that the results of these two conferences provide a solid ground for combating the illicit diamond trade. Egypt would like to reaffirm the importance of expanding the participation in this Process so it is not restricted to a limited and select group. Egypt believes that this expansion should occur particularly if we expect the Process to lead to the development and adoption of an international system to document rough diamonds. This could ultimately lead to the adoption of an international convention that would be much larger in scope and that would establish definite bases agreed upon to combat conflict diamonds and cut the relationship between them and the flow of weapons and finance to illegal armed groups.

Fourthly, at a time when we are attempting to strengthen international cooperation in order to combat illicit trade in conflict diamonds in general, we feel that there is a great and urgent need to tighten the sanctions system that the United Nations has established as regards this type of diamonds in both Angola and Sierra Leone. There is no doubt that the dependence of

the Revolutionary United Front on diamonds extracted from the areas under its control in Sierra Leone has led, and continues to lead, to the financing of, and to increasing the military and financial capacities of, these rebels, which has enabled them to continue the war against the legitimate Government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and to commit the worst types of crimes against humanity against the unarmed civilian population.

The continued violation of international sanctions imposed on UNITA has extended the conflict in Angola and has prevented the legitimate Government in Rwanda from imposing its administrative control and sovereignty over every part of the land. This has caused great damage to the economic and social infrastructure of the country.

Fifthly, on this basis, we look forward to the recommendations that the monitoring mechanism set up by the Secretary-General will present in order to follow up and monitor the implementation of the sanctions imposed on UNITA and those that will be laid down by the group of experts established in accordance with Security Council resolution 1306 (2000) in order to study the relationship between the diamond trade on the one hand and the illicit arms trade in Sierra Leone on the other. We hope that these recommendations will be speedily implemented and that the United Nations will continue to monitor the situation and to make sure that all countries are implementing the recommendations.

We also look forward to the results that the group of experts responsible for examining the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will present and hope that in this context some specific measures will be adopted that will prevent the rebel groups from benefiting from the diamonds extracted from the areas and regions under their control, such as in the Congo.

Furthermore, we call upon all countries to make every effort to prevent their national companies from carrying out any commercial or investment agreements with those rebel groups to search for or to export diamonds, thereby violating the sovereignty of the Congo, until the United Nations can set up legal frameworks that prohibit such activities.

In conclusion, I would like to affirm the support of the delegation of Egypt for the initiative to have the General Assembly, as the major forum that includes all Member States, participate in the efforts, which will now become international, to combat the illicit diamond trade and to confront the question of conflict diamonds. An end must be put to trade in such diamonds.

I would also like to express our support for the draft resolution presented to the General Assembly under this item and to add that the delegation of Egypt is ready to participate in implementing its recommendations.

The President: Before calling on the next speaker I should like to inform members that, in a letter dated 30 November 2000 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of November, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the observer of Switzerland in the debate on agenda item 175.

Taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear a statement by the observer of Switzerland in the debate on this item?

It was so decided.

Ms. Wensley (Australia): In response to growing international concerns about the illicit trade in rough diamonds, the Australian Government is pleased to join in sponsoring the draft resolution introduced by my colleague the Ambassador of South Africa under item 175. We strongly support industry and intergovernmental efforts to break the link between diamonds and conflicts.

As a major diamond-producing country and as a country deeply concerned about continuing seemingly intractable conflicts and what sustains them, Australia has been strongly interested in this issue for some time. Since September this year we have been participating actively in the conflict diamond process. We congratulate the Government of South Africa and other African countries, the diamond industry and non-governmental organizations for their initiative in establishing the Kimberley Group to develop recommendations for possible control measures that

industry and Governments alike could consider introducing.

We also congratulate those diamond industry countries that have gone ahead and introduced new control measures for their diamond trade. We welcome the fact that a number of States have established national diamond certification systems.

My Government also welcomed the action taken by the Security Council in adopting resolutions to prevent the trade in conflict diamonds from Angola and Sierra Leone. The people of Angola and Sierra Leone are suffering terribly from prolonged internal conflicts. We are aware of the strong measures that the Angolan and Sierra Leone Governments have taken to control and provide legitimacy to their diamond trade. But these measures simply cannot work alone. They require the strong and continued support of the international community to help cut this link between conflicts and diamonds. For our part, Australia implemented new customs regulations on 10 November 2000 to comply with Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), banning uncertified rough diamond imports from Sierra Leone.

I reiterate that, as a major diamond-producing country, Australia is prepared to accept the need for new control measures to address the problem of conflict diamonds. The Australian diamond industry produces 35 per cent of the volume of the world's diamonds, which amounts to 5 per cent in value terms. Most of our diamonds are of a relatively smaller size and lower value and therefore are not associated with conflict diamonds. Our diamond industry already operates a certification and packaging scheme and is represented on the World Diamond Council. It has worked actively with the World Diamond Council and the Kimberley Group to develop industry measures to self-regulate the diamond trade and to address this problem of conflict diamonds.

We have supported the work of the Kimberley Group and the outcomes of the Pretoria ministerial conference. We participated in the recent London Intergovernmental Meeting on Conflict Diamonds, hosted by the Government of the United Kingdom, which for the first time gained the support of the world's diamond industry nations. We very much look forward to working again with the Kimberley Group early in the new year at the technical conference to be hosted by Namibia, which is referred to in operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution before the Assembly.

The Australian Government supports fully the self-regulating efforts of our industry and is prepared to consider introducing measures, along with all other diamond-producing, -processing and -consuming countries, to prevent international trade in conflict diamonds. We stress, however, the need for such measures to be effective, simple, transparent and workable from both an industry and a governmental perspective. Such measures should not impose undue restrictions or economic burdens. We would wish to ensure that any certification measures do not impede the world's legitimate diamond trade, which should be conducted consistently with obligations and principles of the World Trade Organization.

The funding of conflicts through the illicit sale of diamonds has devastating humanitarian consequences. We need to act decisively and swiftly to break the nexus between illicit trafficking and transactions in rough diamonds and the sustaining of rebel groups, and thus of the grievous conflicts this trade fuels. We need to do this for many reasons, but above all to help bring an end to the spread of conflicts and related human suffering. A first step would be to adopt this important draft resolution with the strongest possible level of support and commitment from all Member States.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Yesterday *The New York Times* carried a front-page story on the horrors of the war in Sierra Leone. The civil conflict in Sierra Leone has consumed the lives of tens of thousands of innocent people — women, men and children — and has created more refugees than there are currently from any other African country.

The front-page story, however, did not tell us much that we were unaware of. The misery of the people of Sierra Leone has continued for some years now as the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) has carried on its campaign of terror, killings, rapes and mutilations, displacing thousands of people from their homes and across borders.

What has recently come increasingly to international attention is the means through which groups like the RUF sustain their murderous campaign. Diamonds, which should have been a resource for Sierra Leone's development, have become its curse, the currency with which the rebels purchase weapons and ammunition.

Similar scenarios are evident in Angola and other conflict zones, where rebels are illegally exploiting not only diamonds, but also other natural resources and minerals to sustain their activities.

The Security Council has so far constituted four expert panels to look into the dynamics of conflict diamonds, as well as illegal trade in natural resources, and to learn more about the linkages that sustain rebel activities.

Recently, with international assistance from Governments as well as the diamond industry, the Government of Sierra Leone inaugurated a diamond certification scheme, which will help assure buyers that diamonds legally exported from the country are conflict-free. This certification scheme was presented during the first public hearing on Sierra Leone diamonds, as per the decision of the Security Council, which took place on 31 July and 1 August here at the United Nations. The public hearing looked into the problem of conflict diamonds in Sierra Leone, with the participation of Member States, international and regional organizations, the diamond industry and experts.

One country, however watertight a certification regime it may have, matters little in preventing trade in conflict diamonds. In Sierra Leone the rebels continue to hold the best diamond-producing areas and they continue with impunity to smuggle their ill-gotten gains out through neighbouring countries.

The problem is far more complex and needs multidimensional attention.

We believe that there are two broad areas where we have to focus our attention. The first area must involve diamond-producing, -processing, -exporting and -importing countries, as well as the industry, in the development of an international oversight and monitoring mechanism. The draft resolution presented this afternoon by Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo, Permanent Representative of South Africa, contained in document A/55/L.52, proposes the development of a mechanism in the form of an international certification scheme. We believe that it is useful to introduce such a certification regime that involves all countries with legitimate diamond industries. This must be acknowledged and reciprocated with careful oversight by all countries with diamond-trading, -cutting and -polishing industries.

It may be impossible to completely end the trade in conflict diamonds, as it is often subsumed under the trade in illicit diamonds. A transparent and rigorous global certification system will definitely help in this regard. It will help the industry and the countries that depend on it for jobs and income. And if the global certification system serves to end the trade in conflict diamonds, it will help generate resources for development so that millions in Sierra Leone, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo can live their lives in peace, and perhaps eventually in prosperity.

It is encouraging that the diamond industry has decided on steps to rid itself of illicit and conflict diamonds. These have to be implemented and effectively followed up. We must remember that our effort in this regard will be as strong as its weakest links.

Mr. Andino Salazar (El Salvador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The second area where concerted action is needed is combating organized criminal activity involved in trading in conflict diamonds, and severing its nexus with the illicit trade in arms. Even if all producers participated in a global certification regime, non-State actors would not be participating. Their options for marketing conflict diamonds would no doubt be lessened if a global regime were in place, but they will never be eliminated. Narrowing their options can also lead to a takeover of the illicit market by the most sophisticated of the cartels that are involved in the trade in drugs, arms, contraband and precious resources.

I have mentioned that the problem is a complex one. The solution that we have to come up with will also be complex. What will make a difference is our collective will to implement measures that we agree to. We hope that the draft resolution that we anticipate the General Assembly will adopt this afternoon by consensus will be the first step in our efforts to combat conflict diamonds. In all that we do, we should keep the interests of the people foremost in our minds, the people of diamond-producing countries who have suffered irreversible damage due to armed conflict.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom supports the intervention made by the representative of France earlier in this debate in his

capacity as representative of the presidency of the European Union.

Diamonds are traditionally a symbol of love. But for many people in the world today, they have become a curse, not a blessing. The sale of rough diamonds by rebel movements in countries such as Sierra Leone, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo has fuelled conflicts and atrocities which have shocked and angered the world.

Today's agenda item, which was proposed by the United Kingdom, lies at the very core of the principles and purposes of the United Nations. We must break the link between the illicit trade in rough diamonds and armed conflict as part of our efforts on the prevention and resolution of conflicts. We believe that the General Assembly has a crucial role to play in pursuing that goal.

Efforts to address the problem of conflict diamonds started some time ago. The Kimberley Process, launched at the initiative of South Africa, brought together a group of key diamond producers and the diamond industry to begin to make recommendations on preventing the trade in conflict diamonds. The ministerial meeting held at Pretoria in September agreed on the way forward, namely that an international certification scheme was required.

The United Kingdom hosted a meeting at London in October which widened the consensus reached at Pretoria. The meeting brought together all the major diamond producing, processing, exporting and importing countries to discuss their common interest in protecting the legitimate diamond industry whilst agreeing on effective and pragmatic measures to eliminate the scourge of conflict diamonds. Thirty-six countries agreed at London that an international certification scheme was the way forward. We should also not forget the recommendations that the diamond industry itself has made, in particular through the establishment of the World Diamond Council.

Today marks a milestone in our efforts. The draft resolution before us in document A/55/L.52 asks the Kimberley Process to move ahead with an intergovernmental negotiating process to develop detailed proposals for the envisaged international certification scheme for rough diamonds. The United Kingdom believes that those discussions should start quickly and should engage all those with a significant interest. Experts will look to the diamond industry to share its expertise, and to non-governmental organizations with a key interest.

The United Kingdom looks forward to the adoption of the draft resolution before us. We will continue to do what we can to see that the issue of conflict diamonds is addressed urgently through progress on an international certificate scheme, and we will support South Africa, as Chair of the Kimberley Process, as we move ahead with negotiations. We particularly look forward to future discussions in the General Assembly on progress made within the Kimberley Process as negotiations get under way.

The international community must meet the target which this draft resolution sets us: for too many people in the world, stopping the trade in conflict diamonds is, frankly, a matter of life or death.

Mr. Cappagli (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the delegation of South Africa for its introduction of the important draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.52. Our thanks go also to the States members of the Kimberley Process and to those that are participating in related initiatives.

It is ironic that sometimes the possession of natural resources can be a tremendous burden rather than a blessing. The paradox of wealth is that such resources, rather than meeting the needs of society, serve to prolong bloody conflict. The international community is seeking to change this by pursuing a twofold goal: to protect the legitimate resources of peoples in order to benefit present and future generations; and to try to cut the link between those resources and the prolongation of armed conflict in affected regions.

Obviously, this situation is not limited to diamonds, but diamonds have played a central role in many conflicts in Africa. It is therefore necessary to put an end to illicit trafficking in diamonds without hampering the legal trade, which is so important for the economies of many developing countries.

In our view, the progress that has been made just over the past two years has been considerable. In 1999, when Argentina was chairing the Security Council's Sierra Leone sanctions committee, we highlighted the link between illegal diamonds and conflict, and we equated arms merchants with those who knowingly trade in illegal diamonds, or "blood diamonds". Here, we are gratified to note in a whole series of concerted

efforts that the international community — whose determination is reflected in Security Council resolutions — has clearly understood this problem.

In the case of diamonds, the sectors that are most involved — which are the ones in the best position to bring about change — and the diamond industry have decided to play an extremely positive role. That new attitude to the problem deserves to be recognized, and we encourage those parties to continue on the same path. We hope we will be able to take advantage of this momentum to eliminate, to the extent possible, this harmful association between wealth and the waging of conflict. For this, present and future generations will be grateful.

Mr. Mangueira (Angola): This meeting is of particular importance because, for the first time, the General Assembly is considering the issue of conflict diamonds and the necessity of breaking the link between illicit transactions in rough diamonds and armed conflict.

This has been made possible, in the first place, because the international community has finally understood and become concerned about the serious issue of conflict diamonds. This phenomenon exists particularly in areas of Africa, including Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — countries which are considered to be the primary source of conflict diamonds. The second reason is the bloody nature of the trade in such diamonds, the main aim of which is to finance the military activities of rebel movements, including attempts to undermine or overthrow legitimate Governments and, consequently, to continue inflicting suffering and death upon innocent people and destroying the national infrastructure of concerned countries.

Although world diamond statistics reveal that the entire conflict diamond trade amounts to approximately 4 per cent of the total world diamond trade, without a doubt the illicit trade in conflict diamonds reflects negatively on producing countries as well as on processing, exporting and importing countries and the diamond industry. Thus, the international community must fight vigorously against the problem of conflict diamonds and their fuelling of conflicts.

Angola was one of the first countries that clearly understood the link between illicit transactions in rough diamonds and armed conflict. From the very beginning, it has denounced this phenomenon, which allowed the Angolan rebels to continue killing the elderly and children. Unfortunately, despite the efforts made by the Angolan Government to put an end to this frightful war and the denunciation in the Fowler report to the Security Council, there are some ambitious people whose goal is to get rich at any price and who encourage this kind of illicit trade. It is time to put a stop to these illegal practices and activities by establishing a scheme that operates at all levels — national, regional and international. That will be possible only when all States, including key States, and the diamond industry, with the collaboration of civil society, demonstrate the will to fully implement Security Council measures on this matter and unite themselves around one common objective: to take measures prohibiting the illicit trade in rough diamonds which are used by rebel movements to finance military activities.

We are sure that in the future it will be possible to extend these efforts to other, related areas, such as the freezing of rebel movement bank accounts abroad that are fed by this illicit activity, as is done internationally in the case of drug activities.

Angola is one of the Kimberly Process countries and, as a diamond-producing and -exporting country, it has taken national measures in order to regulate the production and purchase of diamonds. In this context, the Angolan Government adopted a strategy against conflict diamonds and the trade in illicit diamonds, as referred to in a document of the Security Council that has been circulated.

UNITA has now lost control of all its traditional provincial strongholds. Consequently, the rebels no longer maintain a standing army capable of controlling and exploiting any significant mining regions at all. The hit-and-run tactics of that rebel movement mean that it is in a state of permanent mobilization in order to avoid direct confrontation with Government military units, rendering it incapable of keeping a mine in operation. Given this fact, UNITA's contribution must now be categorized as virtually nil, and this fact leads us to take issue with the assumption that Angola is a source of conflict diamonds.

In the light of this reality, the Government's strategy tries both to respond to the concern of the international community to prevent conflict diamonds from being produced and commercialized in Angola, and to introduce reforms into the diamond sector

throughout the country, with the aim of maximizing the State's income.

Angola therefore established a single channel for the commercialization of diamonds; an inter-ministerial commission is responsible for reconfiguring the country's diamond concession in order to make their mining more profitable.

Angola was the first country to have a national certificate of origin for diamonds. The most up-to-date technology available has been employed to design certificates of origin for all diamonds exported legally from Angola. In order to strengthen the system of guaranteeing that diamonds are exported legally, there is a "confirmation of import" formality, which ensures that diamonds are dispatched to the recipient specified in the export documents. Furthermore, it has taken measures with regard to packaging, sealing and the credential system, as well as to tightening up security at Angola's various airports and borders.

Angola has actively participated in all the international meetings on conflict diamonds within the Kimberly Process, and was able, through its national efforts, to contribute to the achievement of an international certification scheme against the illicit trade in conflict diamonds, as approved in London, and to safeguard the progress achieved. As a result of the Kimberly initiatives, inter-ministerial conferences have since been held in Angola, South Africa and Namibia.

It is necessary to take into account the national interests of States, based on their national sovereignty, and to avoid the bureaucratization of the trade in diamonds. In this way, it would be beneficial to try to introduce economic and practical measures to facilitate the production and the legal trade in diamonds, without imposing them.

The Angolan Government is fully aware of the role which the international community can play in the eradication of illicit and conflict diamonds. It favours a concerted approach in reaching mutual understanding on this issue. To be effective, these international efforts and initiatives must be based on national and regional experience.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso)(*spoke in French*): Burkina Faso took part in preparing draft resolution A/55/L.52, on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict, which is before the Assembly for consideration. This draft resolution is the fruit of much thinking, in Pretoria and Kimberley in South Africa and in Luanda, London and here in New York.

My delegation wishes to congratulate South Africa and to thank it for the major role that it has played, both in initiating and in finalizing this undertaking. We also thank the other members of the working group, who, untiringly, over many days, developed the document submitted to us today under agenda item 175.

To come together in order to counter the evil role played by diamonds in armed conflict is an excellent, irreproachable initiative, because this illicit trade is prejudicial to peace, particularly in Africa. The various international meetings that I mentioned earlier all focused essentially on the best way to break this evil link between conflict diamonds and the conflicts themselves. This tells us both what is at stake and how important, this debate is.

How is a country such as Burkina Faso involved in these stakes? Here I wish to underline the fact that, if my country is fully committed to this undertaking, it is not for any kind of mercantile reasons, since at present, my country neither produces nor exports nor even imports diamonds. Essentially, our involvement is in function of two considerations.

First of all, we are concerned with transparency and probity, since a certain report sought to damage our reputation and tried to implicate us in some way in Angolan and Sierra Leonean matters. Secondly, we have a sincere desire to work together with other members of the international community to find a viable solution to this increasingly worrying problem. After all, the fundamental problem is that there is no appropriate institutional control mechanism — that is, an international certificate of origin. That being the case, as we have already underlined, how can one identify diamonds produced by neighbouring countries in, for example, West Africa? How can one know that a diamond sold in Burkina Faso comes from a zone of conflict? One must at least be motivated by malevolent intentions, given such conditions, to accuse any particular country of illicit trafficking. It is true that this precious stone has colossal interests behind it; even the slightest suspicion could well lead to anathema or even to punishment.

Burkina Faso therefore believes that we must fill the gap in the present legal system in respect of diamonds coming from conflict areas. We must do that

by subscribing to the principle of codifying clearly the legal rules that would regulate this traffic. We well understand the reservations of certain countries and bodies for which international regulations would go against the way they see things. They quite rightly argue that the number of conflict diamonds is very tiny in relation to that of legal diamonds.

However, we remain convinced that international certification would have the advantage of avoiding confusion and ambiguity. Above all, the advantage would be that it would define a framework of cooperation that would undoubtedly strengthen our controls. Such an international mechanism would also establish clear standards for the diamond industry.

Of course, it is quite clear that, in an area as sensitive and delicate as this, patience is required, because if regulations are enacted, they must apply to all; otherwise, they would not be operational. So we must continue our awareness campaign and persuade people of the work begun at Kimberley and Pretoria.

If we are very cautious in this matter, it is because for us we must first of all achieve a strict control of conflict diamonds to avoid any more suspicions or malicious accusations, which would no doubt lead to many disagreements.

We consider that draft resolution A/55/L.52 is an important step along those lines. Of course, as a co-author — and I am surprised that the draft resolution does not mention us — Burkina Faso would urge the Assembly to adopt this draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Mehta (India): It is ironic that diamonds, a symbol of love, sublimity and purity, have been an object of desire for the rich and the mighty, who have used power, influence, guile, coercion and outright violence to acquire these stones. This has been the story since time immemorial. It is also our experience. Some of the best and the biggest stones mined in India, stolen or taken away from it by force, today adorn the museums and the vaults of others. The issue is not new. It has been brought to the fore only now that Savimbi and his ilk have fallen from the graces of their patrons. Nevertheless, better late than never.

We therefore welcome the consideration by the General Assembly of the issue of conflict diamonds. We believe that to seriously address this problem we need to have a thorough understanding of the extent to which conflict diamonds fuel armed conflict, the magnitude of the problem, the areas afflicted, the measures that have already been put in place to address it and what more could reasonably be done.

The causes of conflicts between States, as well as within societies, are many. So are the means by which such conflicts are fuelled. Direct financial assistance and State support and sponsorship of armed groups and rebels, drugs and diamonds are just some examples. The majority of conflicts around the world have nothing to do with diamonds. Nor do most diamond-producing countries face armed conflict. This problem is localized to just two or three areas. According to the estimates of experts on the diamond industry, less than 4 per cent of rough diamonds could be classified as conflict diamonds. The remaining 96 per cent of rough diamonds are clean. Diamonds per se are not a cause of armed conflict, nor do the overwhelming majority of diamonds come from the conflict areas. It is essential to keep this perspective in mind.

The diamond industry makes a very valuable contribution to the economies of the rough-diamond producing and processing countries, as well as of the exporting and importing countries. In India, which processes nine out of 10 diamonds produced in the world, the diamond industry employs about 1 million people, mostly artisans and small businessmen.

Nevertheless, though conflict diamonds are a small part of the overall diamond trade and come from only a few geographical areas, the problem of these diamonds still needs to be addressed. Our efforts, therefore, have to focus on keeping these rough diamonds from entering the legitimate market, to deny financial resources to rebel movements pursuing armed conflict and to protect the legitimate diamond industry from misguided criticism.

Rough diamonds are traded from a handful of major centres. Once mingled with other diamonds at these centres, their sources cannot be easily distinguished. Due to these peculiarities of the rough-diamond trade, conflict diamonds can best be kept from entering the legitimate market by effective entry controls at the major trading centres. India does not import any rough diamonds from any producing country or from any country in Africa. About 73 per cent of the rough diamonds imported by India come from Belgium, 19 per cent from London, 7 per cent from Israel and 1 per cent from the United States,

Thailand and Hong Kong — none of which are producers of rough diamonds.

We are happy to see that the world diamond industry has, on its own initiative, responded to the concerns about conflict diamonds and has taken a number of measures.

In India, even though we do not import any rough diamonds directly from any producing country, our authorities and the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council — the focal agency for regulating the diamond trade in India — have taken a number of steps to prevent conflict diamonds from entering the mainstream. Let me recount the important ones.

The import of rough diamonds into India is monitored through a system of import licensing, and these imports are sourced only from traditional international trading centres, not from any conflict areas. As a measure of transparency, India publishes monthly import/export statistics which are easily accessible. With every invoice all members of the Council are required to obtain a declaration that the diamonds sold do not contain any conflict diamonds. The Council has decided that any member found indulging in the trading of conflict diamonds will be expelled, thus being effectively kept out of the diamond trade. The banks are advised to take a self-declaration stating that the client commits himself not to deal in conflict diamonds and also not to extend credit to any defaulter expelled by the Council.

It is important that the principal countries engaged in the diamond industry continue their consultations and their efforts, in close collaboration with the diamond industry, to work out internationally agreed arrangements based on national certification schemes as further steps to prevent conflict diamonds from entering the market. However, it is important that these arrangements should not lead to undue financial or administrative burdens being placed on Governments or on the industry.

Let me elaborate on this a bit. Last year, India imported more than 150 million carats of rough diamonds. If each rough diamond were to be accompanied by an elaborate certificate, imagine the financial cost and the administrative machinery required to regulate complicated schemes. As most diamonds processed in India are below the range of $25 per carat, the per carat cost would be enormously high and could lead to a large number of legitimate diamonds being out of the reach of the average buyer. This could have serious economic repercussions on the trade and industry in the diamond-producing, -processing, -exporting and -importing countries, without any certainty that the trade in conflict diamonds would still be fully prevented.

In fact, complex schemes or systems may actually end up adversely affecting the legitimate trade in diamonds. These would also go against the grain of the dictum "innocent until proven guilty", which all of us follow and believe in. To give an analogy, it would be akin to asking all citizens to carry a certificate of innocence from the police, a certificate stating that they are not criminals. We do not know of any country that imposes such practices on its citizens or on its natural resources.

The arrangements to be put in place should therefore be simple, cost-effective and easy to implement. Anything else will be a cure that is worse than the disease. We therefore believe that an internationally agreed arrangement, based on national certification schemes and monitoring mechanisms, is the best solution.

Diamonds do not kill people, arms and weapons do. This simple truth should not be lost on us. It is therefore important that even as we choke off the finances of the rebel groups by blocking the sale of conflict diamonds, the major focus of our collective endeavour should be on the arms suppliers and traffickers, who, for reasons of greed or politics, purvey arms indiscriminately to rebels and terrorists, often with the connivance of arms manufacturers and States.

Until this issue is addressed effectively and comprehensively, efforts to merely reduce the financial resources of rebel groups will not be effective. These would, at best, be a distraction. Rebel groups would find other ways of financing their activities, and conflicts would continue.

The international community is working hard to bring peace to areas torn by conflict. While diamonds are forever, it is to be hoped that the conflicts in the diamond-producing countries will not be. Keeping this in view, it is important that the internationally agreed arrangements that are put in place be of a temporary nature, in keeping with the nature of the problem they are designed to address. We believe that the success of any arrangements will depend on political will and

sincere implementation and not on their complexity and elaborateness.

The concern, the sense of purpose and the determination demonstrated by the diamond-producing, -processing, -exporting and -importing countries to address the issue of conflict diamonds merits the international community's recognition and appreciation.

It is in this spirit that we have become a sponsor of this draft resolution.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada) (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly is today sending the message that its members want to solve the problem of the role played by diamonds in conflict. The draft resolution before us charts a course to that end. Today's debate is an important and encouraging stage on the road to solving that problem. This draft resolution is proof of the remarkable international determination to break the links between the illicit traffic in rough diamonds and armed conflicts.

While the vast majority of diamonds come from legitimate sources, it is nevertheless clear that the trade in the small percentage of diamonds that fuel conflicts has a disproportionate impact on the intensity and intractability of certain armed conflicts. The heavy toll this has on peace and human security — especially in Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — is tragic. The obstacles it places in the way of prosperity and social and economic development in this regard are unacceptable.

(*spoke in English*)

Like others represented in the General Assembly Hall, the Government of Canada is deeply concerned about this issue. That is why during our term on the Security Council, particularly as Chair of the Angola sanctions Committee, we have worked hard in collaboration with others to hasten to an end these devastating conflicts, and the role of diamonds in fuelling them. Those goals will not, however, be met unless all countries represented in this Hall cooperate.

In Canada's view, the endorsement of the General Assembly is crucial if we are to have concrete solutions. The General Assembly brings together all the producing, manufacturing and consuming countries, and most of the trading and transit centres for rough diamonds. It is precisely for that reason that today's debate provides an important opportunity to signal our collective commitment and responsibility to curb this trade.

We are not starting at square one; we have already seen major progress. The Security Council continues to implement its resolutions 1173 (1998) and 1176 (1998), on Angola, and 1306 (2000), on Sierra Leone, and other relevant decisions that target the link between conflict diamonds and conflict. The reports of the panel of experts on Sierra Leone and the new monitoring mechanism on Angola are due by the end of the year. Those reports, and that of the previous Panel of Experts on Angola, will make the imperative of both terminating the role of diamonds in conflict and stopping their toll of human misery unmistakable. That work is already having a major impact.

At the national level, the Governments of Angola and Sierra Leone have taken significant steps to strengthen national controls, as have a number of key trading and marketing centres.

Industry has established the World Diamond Council, a body created to implement industry measures to combat the conflict diamond problem. The creation of the Council is particularly welcome, because it reflects the industry's commitment to action and provides a mechanism to facilitate complementary efforts by Governments.

Civil society also continues to offer key support, through its role in raising awareness and generating ideas and the political will necessary to bring about resolution.

Perhaps most remarkable, though, has been the Kimberley Process. Launched under the leadership of southern African countries, it has broken new ground in international cooperation and has galvanized international action by bringing together a cross-section of key players to begin taking practical steps towards resolving the problem. Canada was pleased to participate both in the Pretoria ministerial meeting in September and in the London Intergovernmental Meeting, held in October. Those meetings were also important milestones at which the number of countries involved in the Kimberley Process increased and the foundation for future work was laid.

The South African draft resolution introduced today takes the international community one important step further by initiating a more comprehensive and inclusive intergovernmental process. That process will

focus on the development of concrete proposals for action. We commend South Africa for this initiative. We also welcome the offer of the Government of Namibia to host the first technical meeting of the process. Canada is pleased to join others in sponsoring this draft resolution. We invite the support of the international community as a whole.

The problem before us is complex and touches on important issues. Progress will take perseverance, cooperation, consequence and pragmatism. Perseverance is required because the stakes are high and the challenges complex. Solutions are needed to ensure real protection for real people, usually quite innocent civilians who live their lives under the constant threat of violence from people who profit from conflict diamonds. Cooperation is needed because we need to build on the inclusiveness of the Kimberley model and expand participation in it. Partnerships between Governments, industry, civil society and relevant international organizations will be of key importance in bringing together those with the political authority and those with the technical expertise. All States with a significant interest in diamonds need to be involved. Consequence is needed because we must go beyond diplomatic niceties to develop effective measures. Canada supports further consideration of an international certification scheme for rough diamonds. Finally, pragmatism is needed because the measures we develop will need to be workable, cost-effective, fair, not unduly burdensome on the industry, and informed by existing expertise, experience and best practice; and they must not impose collateral damage on the legitimate diamond trade.

As a new producer and manufacturer of diamonds, Canada considers that it has both a responsibility for and an interest in participating in international efforts to curb conflict diamonds. We intend to work closely with domestic and international stakeholders, in particular those Governments involved in the international trade in rough diamonds.

As the United Nations, our common goal must be to eliminate diamonds as a driver of conflict and preserve them as a force for prosperity.

In conclusion, I take the opportunity to express our gratitude to the British Government for its leadership in placing this item on the agenda of the General Assembly, and to the South African Government for its leadership in preparing the draft resolution before us. I salute in particular the work of our colleague the Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. Dumisani Kumalo.

Mr. Adam (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium fully endorses the statement made by the Permanent Representative of France on behalf of the European Union. My delegation has also taken note of the concern he expressed on behalf of France. Like him, we think that this concern is covered in the draft resolution before us.

I have asked to take the floor because Belgium participated, as a member of the Kimberly Process, in the negotiations on the draft resolution under this agenda item. We are satisfied with the development of those negotiations under the able leadership of South Africa, for which we express our thanks, and with their result. Moreover, we have also co-sponsored the draft resolution.

On several occasions and in various venues, debates have been held on the role of high-value commodities, and diamonds in particular, in the funding and prolongation of devastating conflicts. It is important that this debate should continue within our General Assembly, because the issue is a complex one, with many implications at various levels.

While the number of conflicts in which diamonds play a part is a limited one, the problem of conflict diamonds has global dimensions. Thanks to international trade and its modalities, conflict diamonds can turn up on all continents. An effective solution must therefore be global and include all actors concerned - State and non-State alike.

Belgium is gratified at the work accomplished by the Kimberley process, which provided the framework for such a solution. The London conference, held on 25 and 26 October, represented also an important step on the way, because, among other things, it succeeded in broadening the circle of concerned countries. We must maintain this momentum, and we are convinced that the draft resolution that was introduced by South Africa will contribute to doing so.

Our work will not end with today's debate. We must initiate, as early as possible, intergovernmental negotiations in order to set up an international certification system. We will have to be pragmatic and efficient. The experience we have acquired in the cases of Angola and Sierra Leone, in which the Diamond

High Council of Belgium has played a significant role, will be precious to us. My country is determined to continue to contribute to finding valid solutions and to implement them.

Until we find a comprehensive solution to the problem of conflict diamonds, States can start to take measures at the national level. The trade in diamonds has for too long been shrouded by a veil of discretion. In this respect, we call for greater transparency in all diamond markets.

Belgium is publishing detailed statistics on its diamond trade and has taken measures to strengthen its monitoring. We call on other diamond centres to follow our example.

Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone): Permit me, Mr. President, to compliment my colleague Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo of South Africa for introducing this draft resolution.

We are assembled here today to bear witness to the evolving trends in the regulation and control of the global diamond industry and the accompanying processes associated with it. We are also here to bear witness to the dismantling of the trade links between the illicit exchange of rough "conflict" diamonds for armaments as a direct measure for frustrating the heinous objectives of rebel movements. For Sierra Leone, the process of re-legitimizing the trade in diamonds began in earnest upon the adoption of Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), of 5 July 2000, with the imposition of a ban on the direct and indirect import of rough diamonds from Sierra Leone, as well as the tightening of the arms embargo regime against non-governmental forces in the country.

The Council further requested my Government to put an effective Certificate of Origin scheme into operation. In compliance with resolution 1306 (2000), my Government presented full details and a complete description of the new certification regime for the export of rough and uncut diamonds, and it formally presented the new Certificate of Origin to the Security Council Committee on 5 August 2000. Based upon further requests for information pertaining to the programme for monitoring the sale of diamonds under the proposed regime, my Government responded accordingly with the submission of additional information to the Committee towards this end. It further expressed that any delay in the export of diamonds that had been stockpiled since the adoption of resolution 1306 (2000) would have a serious negative impact on Sierra Leone's foreign exchange earnings, needed to finance basic services in our war-afflicted nation.

With the approval of the Security Council Committee, the first set of diamonds under the new Certificate of Origin was exported on 23 October 2000, and the Government of Sierra Leone has accordingly emphasized that all exporters of Sierra Leone diamonds should in future produce a certificate of origin authorized by it with parcels in a tamper-free package. It has further emphasized that any signs of tampering would violate resolution 1306 (2000).

It now behoves the international community to effectively put in place appropriate mechanisms aimed at encouraging the global diamond trade to contribute to world peace and sustainable economic development, as opposed to perpetuating conflict.

My delegation wishes to observe that this body has keenly listened to, and digested, the contents of various discussions on the role of diamonds in facilitating armed conflicts, especially with regard to Sierra Leone and Angola. Both of these conflicts continue to defy the familiar genre of war. Many similar struggles mirror long-festering ethnic, religious or linguistic differences, socio-economic inequities, oppression of minorities or the suppression of human rights. The crisis, especially with regard to Sierra Leone, cannot be labeled as a revolution or a civil war. It can be termed neither an ethnic or communal insurrection, nor an insurgency or guerrilla warfare. It has been, and remains, plain thuggery, intensified by looting and greed, externally aided and abetted. It has been characterized by nine years of banditry, rape, amputations, brutality of horrific proportions, abductions and indiscriminate killings, all perpetrated against innocent, peace-loving civilians.

There are complex, entrenched relationships between exploitative systems of financial intermediation and resource management, poverty, and the spectacular, mysterious wealth of the diamond trade.

These relationships are clearly elucidated in the informal diamond-mining sector, wherein organized crime — in the guise of smuggling, gun-running and money- laundering — which has hitherto blighted the legitimate diamond industry, has an effective control on the informal market. The effects of this long-

standing blight upon Sierra Leone's diamond industry has occasioned destabilization in all facets of our society. It has consequently robbed an entire nation's posterity, and has, ironically, led us to be classified as the poorest of the poor. It has given rise to a generation of drug-crazed hooligans toting weapons of mass destruction and leaving abject misery in their wake. Diamonds are supposed to be a girl's best friend, but clearly that this does not hold true in the case of the women in Sierra Leone who have lost either their lives or their limbs as a direct result of illicit proceeds from the sale of conflict diamonds.

My delegation welcomes the outcome of the ministerial meeting on diamonds in Pretoria, Republic of South Africa, and the London Intergovernmental Meeting on Conflict Diamonds. Sierra Leone also welcomes the African initiative that has led to the Kimberly Process and will also commit our manpower resources to ensuring that a workable certification scheme is globally adopted.

My delegation, being a co-sponsor of this draft resolution, wishes to reiterate the call for all States to fully implement Security Council measures targeting the link between the trade in conflict diamonds and the supply of logistics and equipment to rebel movements.

Mr. Mmualefe (Botswana): Let me express my delegation's profound gratitude at the willingness of the General Assembly to consider the issue of conflict diamonds. This issue is of great concern to us, not only because it threatens to tarnish the image of a commodity which has been precious to relations between human beings and vital to the economic development of countries such as mine, but also due to the fact that conflict diamonds have become a potent tool in the hands of those intent on violating the rule of law nationally and international human rights and humanitarian law.

As everyone is aware, Botswana is one of the world's largest producers of gemstones. Diamonds are currently the core of our industrial production and economic development. The discovery and exploitation of diamonds in Botswana, coupled with prudent economic management and a commitment to a democratic and rule-based society, have led to the present stage of our modest achievements. Save for the reversals brought about by the ravages of the HIV/AIDS scourge, our country has made tremendous strides in the socio-economic upliftment of its people, as has been testified to by United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions.

There may be some who may be tempted to argue that almost all conflict diamonds are produced primarily in Africa to fuel conflicts there. Thus, the argument may go so far as to opine that conflict diamonds are primarily an African problem. I would hasten to reject such thinking, for it is our conviction, and reasonably so, that the issue has global ramifications. An illicitly produced diamond becomes a conflict diamond once it has been involved in a transaction to facilitate the activities of rebel movements. There can be no denying, and evidence abounds in this regard, that such transactions transcend African borders and sovereignty.

Being a country which is committed to the pursuit of the rule of law at both the national and international levels, we have found it appropriate and prudent to join hands with all diamond producing, processing, exporting and importing countries, through the Kimberley Process, to devise workable means to deny conflict diamonds access to the markets. To do this effectively, we will need the involvement not only of Governments, but of the diamond industry and civil society as well. We are glad that the Kimberley Process has already established that norm and remain hopeful that this will continue to be the case in an expanded format of that Process.

My delegation welcomes important initiatives already taken to address the problem of conflict diamonds by the Governments of Angola and Sierra Leone and by other key countries, as well as by the diamond industry and civil society, including the creation by industry of the World Diamond Council. Most importantly, we welcome the offer by the Government of the sisterly Republic of Namibia to convene a workshop of the leading diamond producing, processing, exporting and importing countries, in continuance of the Kimberley Process, to consider technical aspects of an international certification scheme for rough diamonds.

As I have already stated, we are of the firm view that the problem of conflict diamonds has a global or international dimension. It necessarily requires all diamond producing, processing, exporting and importing countries to act in concert if we are to effectively shut out conflict diamonds from the market.

In order to act in concert, we certainly have to create and implement an international certification scheme for rough diamonds. While we recognize that existing national certification schemes can enrich our approach towards the creation of an international certification scheme, we firmly believe that national practices will be helpful in addressing the problem of conflict diamonds only if they meet internationally agreed standards. The need for transparency also cannot be overemphasized. Thus, we believe that the whole process should culminate in the creation of appropriate arrangements to ensure compliance with the tenets of the envisaged international certification scheme for rough diamonds.

While all diamond producing, processing, exporting and importing countries embark on a path to deny conflict diamonds access to the market, the victims of the exploiters of conflict diamonds would be well served by strict and full implementation by all Member States of all Security Council measures targeting the link between the trade in conflict diamonds and the supply to rebel movements of weapons, fuel or other prohibited material.

We eagerly look forward to the convening early next year in Windhoek, Namibia, of a workshop to consider technical aspects pertaining to the envisaged international certification scheme for rough diamonds.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation): Today, the promotion of the stable and enduring development of the African States is one of the international community's principal goals. The close relationship between the settlement of military and political crises in Africa with the eradication of poverty on that continent was referred to by President Putin of the Russian Federation in his statement at the Security Council summit of 7 September, in which he stressed that

> "the future of the continent depends to a great degree on the speedy and effective settlement of these conflicts. If in the twentieth century Africa became free from colonialism, the twenty-first century should rid it of poverty and military confrontation". (*S/PV.4194, p. 11*)

One of the elements of the world community's efforts to prevent and settle intense crisis situations — apart from eliminating the deep political, social, economic and other causes — should be the concrete work done to neutralize the sources of financing of armed anti-Government groupings in a number of African States. The destructive action of these groupings costs many thousands of lives, undermines the peace and stability of whole regions and prevents their normal social and economic development.

The Russian Federation urges decisive action to cut off illegal trade in rough diamonds, which finances ongoing armed conflicts, particularly in Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Consistently advocating constructive international cooperation on these issues, we have taken an active part in developing possible measures in this area. Russia has worked closely with all interested countries to achieve agreed approaches to resolving the problem of conflict diamonds.

The starting point was the appeal in the final communiqué from the Group of Eight Summit in Okinawa this year — an appeal to convene, on the basis of Security Council resolution 1306 (2000) and the Kimberley Process, an international conference to review and subsequently submit to the United Nations proposals for practical ways and means to cut the link between illegal trade in diamonds and armed conflicts. These proposals would include studying the possibility of arriving at an international agreement on the certification of rough diamonds.

On this basis, we adopted the invitation by the initiators of the Kimberley Process to join the dialogue within that framework. We made our contribution to the London round in July 2000 and in the meeting of a working group of experts in Windhoek on 4 and 5 September. We contributed at the ministerial level meeting in Pretoria on 19 and 20 September and at the London Intergovernmental Meeting on 25 and 26 October. We have a positive appreciation of the results of those forums and the desire of their participants to find effective resolutions, to form approaches and definitions — in particular relating to conflict diamonds — and to achieve concrete recommendations that merit further careful analysis and detailed work.

Our position of principle is that the ways to resolve the problem of conflict diamonds should be adequate to the scale of the problem, should be simple and should be, in practice, achievable. They must be concisely oriented to resolving the main problem, which is to break the link between illegal trade in rough diamonds and the financing of attempts by rebellious groups to overthrow lawful Governments. To

achieve that goal, it is necessary to have joint efforts that would reliably cut off delivery of conflict diamonds, which represent approximately 4 per cent of the international trade in diamonds, to the international markets.

We must therefore pay careful attention to a reliable defence of the legal interests of the legitimate participants in the world diamond trade, who are an important segment of the world economy and are the basis of the social and economic development of many African countries. Any hasty or poorly thought out actions in such a sensitive area as the diamond business could lead to destabilization of the diamond market and could in fact do great damage to the economies of the producer countries and of those that process rough diamonds.

We are in favour of intensive joint work of all interested States with strict respect for the standards of international law and respect for national sovereignty of all States. We must also take into account the need to maintain the stability and predictability of the experienced and centuries-old world diamond market. There is absolutely no doubt that the implementation of the ideas to form ways of certifying diamonds is a complex, step-by-step and long-term matter, and it is burdensome from the financial point of view, which requires considerable efforts, including improving national legal bases in many States.

We are firmly convinced that the most simple, logical and effective method for resolving this problem of conflict diamonds would be to introduce a system of certification based on national certification of origin of rough diamonds, on national databases and on national systems of control. I must stress that these national structures must take into account and respond to internationally agreed minimal parameters. The realization of this sort of approach would promote not only a successful resolution of this problem, but would also make it possible to fully ensure that we look after the economic interests and the sovereignty of the producers of rough diamonds. From that point of view, the international community can rely upon the national certification systems already in place in Angola and Sierra Leone. It is very important to study the way in which those structures work and to give interested States the necessary help in implementing those systems. Already possessing an effective system of State control on the movement of rough diamonds, Russia is prepared to give all interested States constructive assistance in this area.

Let me take this opportunity to point out that in the months ahead our country will conclude the preparation and the launching of a national certification system for rough diamonds. Russia has actively taken part in the preparation of the draft resolution today and is one of the authors. It is very important that the provisions in the draft are based on the appropriate resolutions of the Security Council and on the consensus wording agreed upon in the Kimberley Process, which was fixed in particular in the statement from the ministerial meeting in Pretoria dated 21 September (*A/55/638*) and the communiqué of the London Intergovernmental Meeting of 26 October (*A/55/628*).

I would like to stress that in resolving this very complex problem of conflict diamonds, one must be governed by a consensus approach, which would considerably facilitate progress towards agreed positions with the participation of all interested States — above all the outstanding exporters, processers and importers of rough diamonds and also the representatives of the diamond trade. All the technical details relating to the format and modalities of a future international agreement — the ways, the methods and the timetable for achieving the goal I have mentioned and the mechanism for implementing the decisions adopted — should be the subject of consideration during the forthcoming process of intergovernmental negotiations.

The adoption of the resolution would send a clear political signal that the General Assembly of the United Nations supports the international effort to cut off the use of this illegal trade in diamonds for the financing of the actions of anti-Government groupings. We assume that our further joint work on resolving the problem of conflict diamonds will truly promote a cessation of armed conflicts in Africa. It will prevent the rise in that region of new crisis situations. On the African continent it will strengthen peace, stability and security and will ensure conditions for successful economic and social development.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): I would like to join other speakers in expressing our gratitude to the President, for holding this important debate on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict, especially as regards the specific action that the General Assembly can take

to contribute to the prevention and settlement of conflicts by breaking the infamous link between the illicit trade in rough diamonds and armed conflict.

A substantial amount of work has already been undertaken at high levels. My delegation would like to congratulate the African diamond-producing countries, particularly, the Republic of South Africa, for having initiated a trail-blazing, inclusive process of consultations between government, industry and civil society, referred to as the Kimberly Process, to deal with this issue. My delegation also welcomes the important measures taken by the Security Council which target the link between trade in rough diamonds and the supply of weapons, fuel or other prohibited material to rebel groups. These measures include Council resolutions 1173 (1998), 1295 (2000), 1306 (2000) as well as resolution 1304 (2000).

We are further encouraged by the global awakening regarding the link between trade in rough diamonds and armed conflict. In addition to the African initiative, there was also the London Intergovernmental Meeting on Conflict Diamonds on 25 and 26 October 2000. Today's meeting, therefore, is a culmination of a process of sensitization and stock-taking with regard to the grave threat both to international peace and security and the diamond industry at large, posed by this infamous link. My delegation is convinced that the draft resolution before us seeks to streamline and strengthen United Nations and other initiatives on this issue.

Namibia would like to stress for the record that the problem of rough diamonds and armed conflict is not only an African problem. It is a global problem which affects not just the diamond-producing countries but those that process, export and import diamonds. It has potential implications for the entire diamond industry and Governments worldwide. It is against this background and in the spirit of global partnership that my delegation seeks a solution to this problem, including through enlisting support for the draft resolution before us today.

The draft resolution seeks to institute the creation and implementation of a simple and workable international certification scheme for rough diamonds with the widest possible participation of all concerned. Namibia is a key player in the world diamond industry, contributing about 8 per cent of world gem diamond production. The diamond industry in Namibia employs nearly 5.3 per cent of the total work force. We therefore support every effort to ensure that the image of the global diamond industry is not tarnished.

An independent international certification scheme for rough diamonds will go a long way in helping to resolve the problem of illicit trade in rough diamonds and its link to armed conflict. It is for this reason, among others, that the Government of Namibia offered to host a workshop to look into technical aspects of such a certification scheme. This workshop will take place in our capital, Windhoek, during the third week of January 2001, and my delegation seizes this opportunity to welcome all those who will participate.

Mr. Apata (Nigeria): It is very ironic that a gift of nature so beautiful and precious as a diamond, a gem which is supposed to bring joy and happiness to its owners, has become an instrument for destabilization and insecurity. Recently, its possession and control have become one of the major causes of conflict in Africa, and the wealth it generates is used to fuel wars.

We all know that we cannot wage war without money, and diamonds are money. According to market estimates, about 3 per cent of rough diamonds produced globally now come from conflict areas in Africa. According to the report from De Beers, diamonds from African war zones account for 10 to 15 per cent of the world supply. While market manipulation guarantees high prices, the portability and anonymity of diamonds have made them the currency of choice to the merchants of war in Africa. Examples abound in the intractable war in Angola and in the Sierra Leone conflicts, which are sustained from the proceeds from diamonds.

Where diamonds are responsibly mined, exploited and managed, as in Botswana, South Africa and Namibia, they can and do contribute to development and stability. But where Governments face difficulties, rebels are pitiless and borders are porous — as in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone — this beautiful gem that is admired by all humanity can easily be turned into an agent of murder, terrorism, economic and social chaos and political instability. When diamonds fall into the hands of warlords like Jonas Zavimbi and Foday Sankoh, the result is prolonged conflict and refugees and internally displaced persons. UNITA's behaviour and its effective use of diamonds to fuel the war in Angola were what

led the United Nations to impose a diamond embargo in 1998.

In the case of Sierra Leone, Foday Sankoh and members of the Revolutionary United Front used the proceeds from diamonds which they forcefully procured from diamond fields in eastern Sierra Leone to buy arms, which they then used to unleash horrendous havoc on hapless civilians.

Members of the international community cannot, and indeed must not, stand by and allow this orgy of violence to continue. That is why it is important for the United Nations to tackle the problem at its source. Instead of spending millions of dollars on peacekeeping, let us tackle the source of conflict by cutting off access to funds generated from the illicit sale of diamonds. This is why our delegation supports the draft resolution on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflicts. Our co-sponsorship is based on our conviction of the need to break the link between illicit transactions in rough diamonds and armed conflict, an important measure to prevent conflict, especially in the African continent.

The problem of conflict diamonds is of serious international concern, and efforts to address the issue must take into consideration all concerned parties involved in producing, processing and exporting — including facilitators of the legal trade — as well as the importing countries. The measures should be effective, pragmatic and consistent with international law. The international community must therefore send a clear message through the resolution of the General Assembly that it will no longer tolerate a situation where natural resources such as diamonds, which could have been used to promote social and economic development of the countries concerned, are instead, in the current situation, being used by a few warlords who completely control the resources for their own personal gain and benefit. The international community must show its resolve by ensuring that all those involved are brought to justice in accordance with international law.

The Nigerian delegation would like to commend the initiatives of the Security Council and the sanctions committee, which held a hearing on diamonds and their effect on the conflict in Sierra Leone in August this year. That hearing provided a forum for the various actors in the diamond trade to air their views. Nigeria supports the recommendations of the World Federation of Diamond Bourses and the International Diamond Manufacturers Association that, firstly, each accredited rough diamond importing country, whether a producer, manufacturing or dealing centre, should enact legislation to regulate the sale of diamonds; secondly, every diamond trader should adopt an ethical code of conduct as regards conflict diamonds; and lastly, a certificate of origin should be issued for diamonds emanating from conflict zones.

Our delegation would like to commend the efforts of the United Kingdom, which has taken the lead on the issue of illicit diamonds as it affects Sierra Leone, including the adoption of Security Council resolution 1306 (2000). In addition, we would like to commend the efforts of Ambassador Fowler of Canada for his pioneering work as Chairman of the Security Council's sanctions committee and for his efforts on illegally mined diamonds as they affect the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Nigeria strongly believes that the adoption of this resolution will send a very important and powerful message to all those engaged in this nefarious trade that the international community will no longer tolerate such activity. Diamonds are forever, but we must not allow diamonds to fuel conflicts forever.

Mr. Muchetwa (Zimbabwe): As a sponsor of agenda item 175 — the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict — my delegation has requested the floor to remind the member delegations that the days of the "no questions asked diamond-buying policy" are over.

My delegation welcomes the draft resolution before us and hopes that its adoption will serve as a precursor to the establishment of an international legal regime that will criminalize, as examples, the illicit trade in diamonds by rebel groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and Sierra Leone.

It is the considered view of my delegation that our understanding of the sources of violence in the countries just mentioned above requires a comprehension of the economics underpinning those raging conflicts. One scholar has observed:

> "Conflict can create war economies, often in the regions controlled by rebels or warlords and linked to international trading networks; members of armed groups can benefit from looting ... under these circumstances, ending civil wars becomes difficult. Winning may not be desirable: the point of war may be precisely the legitimacy which it

confers on actions that in peacetime would be punishable as crimes."

Responding to a panel of experts report on Angola earlier on this year, my delegation submitted to the Security Council that the failure to account for the presence of economic agendas in conflict had at times seriously undermined international efforts to consolidate fragile peace agreements. I wish to reiterate that the true cause of the civil wars raging in some African countries is not so much the loud discourse of grievance, but the silent force of greed.

In the case of Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the abundance of natural resources, including diamonds, has become a curse. It is the availability of these diamonds, exported as a primary commodity, that spawns violent conflict, because it provides incentives for rebel groups to form on the basis of capturing loot, which sustains their activities.

With your indulgence, Mr. President, my delegation wishes to remind members that a primary commodity like diamonds presents several advantages to the rebels. Because they are a generic product, their origin can easily be concealed and their marketing does not require complicated processes, as is the case with manufactured goods.

It is in this context that the importance of the draft resolution before us becomes apparent. Since the extra-legal mercantilist basis of conflict diamonds is contingent on the availability of an external market, the exporting and importing countries should strive to find ways to improve cooperation on law enforcement — and this draft resolution could be one such instrument.

My delegation therefore regards this draft resolution as a means of signalling the international community's determination to proscribe the illicit trade in conflict diamonds.

Mr. Mutaboba (Rwanda): My delegation wishes to thank the South African delegation for the efforts made to take the first steps towards regulating the certification of rough diamonds. As Ambassador Holbrooke said, and as delegations succeeding him also said, we agree entirely with the statement made that conflict diamonds constitute a global problem and the problem needs a global solution.

Some countries already feel insecure because of what they are trying to download on the shoulders of the innocent poor countries — meaning exploitation, commercialization and/or smuggling — and you can name them. The search for words and safeguards to feel good is not good enough. Action is needed. We have many resolutions, but we need to see action taken. We have to address the issues and call animals by their name.

Diamonds are not bartered for potatoes and beans; they are exchanged for heavy weapons and hard currency. This hard currency does not mean the Rwandan franc or a CFA; it means hard currency. Conflict diamonds are there for the same people — those who can obtain them, and those who have the means and the thirst for them. Distancing themselves, therefore, from their responsibilities would be a lack of initiative to solve the problem.

It looks as if we still have a long way to go in our duty to solve this problem of conflict diamonds. The definitions added in the resolution, and words added in different statements, written neither here or there, referring to "invited" and so on, when talking of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are nothing but a way of masking the reality. Who is responsible for the exploitation, and more especially, who is responsible for the smuggling and commercialization of those diamonds? It is nobody in there. We should point a finger in the direction of where the responsibility is said to lie.

When we talk of conflicts in Sierra Leone, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we can give them a name, depending on who you are, what you want to say and what you want to achieve. Today, some people just say: It is illegal exploitation of the Congo, for example. I say: It is our survival. Some people say: Invite the guests. I said yes, but they are *genocidaires*. Those I am following in the Congo are today called "invited guests". It is amazing. And I am not invited.

So the issue of words is nothing but a diversion from the issue. While recognizing the very good essence behind this draft resolution, my delegation wishes to see action taken, and taken adequately.

The Acting President *(spoke in Spanish)*: In accordance with the decision taken earlier at this meeting, I call on the observer of Switzerland.

Mr. Helg (Switzerland)*(spoke in French)*: It happens that diamonds have fuelled some of the most

terrible conflicts we have ever seen in the world. Because of that, Switzerland attaches the greatest importance to breaking the vicious chain which seems to establish that the illicit trade in diamonds brings with it a similar trade in arms. We are firmly determined to do everything possible so that our territory does not lead to any kind of abuse.

In that spirit, my country welcomes and supports the efforts made in the Kimberley Process, which calls upon the States concerned, industry and non-governmental organizations to cooperate on this issue. My authorities also took an active part in the London Intergovernmental Meeting on Conflict Diamonds.

Because of the place it occupies in the international trade of precious stones, Switzerland is fully aware of its responsibilities. We have fully implemented the Security Council resolutions concerning Angola and Sierra Leone. We cooperate closely with the United Nations expert groups engaged in the struggle against any form of transactions with diamonds linked to conflicts.

In addition, the Swiss Government is applying measures that go beyond what is required by the United Nations resolutions. In particular, we are monitoring with great vigilance the origin and movement of rough diamonds on the market, particularly those which reach its territory by roundabout routes. Furthermore, the Swiss authorities are completely reviewing the regulations concerning free ports. Their objective is to have greater control over all rough diamonds entering or leaving the free ports on Swiss territory.

It is also because of the place that it occupies in the world diamond trade that Switzerland strongly supports the introduction of an international certification system for rough diamonds. This system should be effective, selective and applicable — effective in the sense that it must, without any roundabout means, attack illegal trafficking, corruption and fraud. It must be selective to the extent that the struggle against illicit trading in diamonds should not be to the detriment of the legal trade. It is only with the unhesitating support of the diamond industry that an international certification system would be possible. And then it must be applied very easily, and by that I mean that the system that has to be elaborated so that it not lead to additional bureaucratic obstacles, but that it does lead to simple, pragmatic measures to make it possible for operators to be comfortably associated in battling illicit traffic.

In the eyes of Switzerland, this system of certification is in the spirit of the Interlaken process, which we initiated and where so-called targeted sanctions are developed — let us say we penalize, first of all, certain well-defined groups of actors, while minimizing damage and collateral effects on neighbouring States and civil society.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the States represented here of Switzerland's political will to make every possible effort to eradicate completely the exploitation of natural resources, specifically diamonds, for any conflict-related purposes. It is true that these armed conflicts are more than a matter of diamonds, but in attacking this method of financing, the international community is adding a sizeable element to the fragile edifice that the United Nations, through its peacekeeping operations and through the personnel commitment of its staff, has undertaken to rebuild in Africa.

The Acting President *(spoke in Spanish)*: We have heard the last speaker on this subject.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.52, entitled "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict: breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to prevention and settlement of conflicts".

Before we take action on draft resolution A/55/L.52, I should like to announce that since its introduction, the following countries have become sponsors: Burkina Faso, Papua New Guinea, Romania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.52?

Draft resolution A/55/L.52 was adopted (resolution 55/56).

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): I will be very, very brief. I am taking the floor to thank the members of the Assembly for having supported this resolution. I know that several delegations had great difficulty with certain sections of the resolution, but this is the beginning of the process, and I hope they will stay engaged with us as we move along to develop this process in the coming days.

A few countries have really helped us in guiding this process, and I should like to thank them. They include the United Kingdom, which even had a meeting in London that followed up on this issue, and Russia, whose Foreign Minister was among those who, together with my Foreign Minister and the Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom, began to work on the idea of a draft resolution very early on. Of course, we could never have achieved this without our neighbours — Namibia, Angola and Botswana — who have really been driving this process at home and through the Pretoria process. I wish to thank them, and everyone else who voted for this resolution, very much for this.

Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation apologizes for taking the floor at this late hour. We merely wish to thank you, Mr. President, and, through you, the entire Bureau of the General Assembly, for having responded favourably to the request by the United Kingdom to add the item on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict.

We would like also to thank the sisterly Republic of South Africa and its representative for their patience and skill in the conduct of the negotiations. I also thank the experts who worked day and night for three weeks on the resolution that has just been adopted, which definitely meets the expectations of my delegation. We have no doubt that the instrument just adopted by the Assembly is a further step that will complement all initiatives already adopted with a view to breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to prevention and settlement of conflicts.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of item 175.

Programme of work

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform members that the General Assembly will resume consideration of item 47, "Assistance in mine action", on Monday, 4 December 2000, in the morning, as the second item, to consider a revised draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.51/Rev.2. The revised draft resolution will be issued on Monday, 4 December 2000, in the morning.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.